Citizen's Coordinating Council
Pittsfield High School
February 11, 1999
Special Meeting Highlights

Prepared by the Massachusetts Office of Dispute Resolution.

Participants

28 members of the CCC were present. There were approximately 15 people in the audience.

Welcome and Agenda Review

Jane noted that the purpose of the meeting was to further discuss GE's draft proposal for removal activity for the first ½ mile of the river.

Discussion of the Draft Removal Action Workplan-Upper ½-Mile Reach of the Housatonic River

A question was posed about the role and ability of the CCC to reopen issues agreed upon in the mediated agreement, in particular, on-site consolidation. Members were reminded that the role of the Council (as agreed upon and noted in the CCC's principles of operation) is to discuss *how* the activities agreed upon in the mediated settlement might be best implemented. EPA discussed on site consolidation. Noted that it is part of the whole agreement which has "good parts and parts not everyone will be happy with". May be able to discuss how much and how it is done. On-site consolidation was not an EPA requirement, but EPA said could be done. Must treat as part of package. EPA noted that on-site consolidation has been used reliably a number of times before. The agencies emphasized, and the Council strongly desired, that there be another meeting for the sole purpose of discussing the consolidation issue.

Mike Palermo from the Army Corps of Engineers was introduced. He then fielded questions regarding the draft plan for removal activity for the first ½ mile of the river. The following are highlights of the questions and answers.

EPA noted that EPA & DEP technical staffs are reviewing the document along with several private consulting firms & ACOE. EPA wants to get as much public input as possible. Concerns with long-term monitoring, cap, and amount of removal were noted. Premature to give detailed responses to questions because decisions haven't been finalized yet. Not trying to be evasive.

Question (Q) Has corps had experience with caps of this size – almost ¼ mile?

Mike Patermo (MP) - No, but have had enough experience with caps to believe that this will work. This river has some unique features. Most caps done in estuarine environmental

- Sheboygan. Field pilot study. Rivers pilot study. Rivers have different things to design for – floods and ice. No precedents so far.

- Experience in method of placement of materials, cap design. Have all the tools to do this.

Q - Do you intend to cap banks because of steepness of banks?

MP - Capping banks is not proposed, but this may be something we want to look at more closely.

Q - Any cap failures?

MP- No instances of failure.

- Easier to design armor layer to resist scoring and erosion - straightforward then to design cap to contain contamination. This cap must both stabilize remaining sediments & isolate them. Must retard movement of contaminants up through cap.
- Dry construction process proposed is easier than wet.

GE - Used Army Corps of Engineers designs. St. Lawrence River and 3-acre cap w/ clay coated stone. Toledo, OH (Ottowa River)

GE- Restoration habitat & recontouring river. Putting back less than taking out.

MP- Geotextiles have been in use for quite a while – e.g. Norway in connection w/ garbions (spelling?). Normally used to prevent layers from mixing, not needed here. But will not isolate contaminants. Geotextile may prevent sand from being washed into stone. Commonly applied for over 25 years.

Q- Concern over longevity of cap and failure-what would be dollar cost. Might other more expensive options be better in the long run?

MP - Would think it would cost more than original installation. No way to tell, don't know cost estimates to proposals.

EPA – In regards concern over how much is proposed to be removed. The more that is removed, the less to worry about.

MP - No full scale cap. Decision to dredge. Temporary membrane was used before dredging began. There were some problems such as gas bubbling up.

- Not sure what is meant by natural cap. Proposed cap is salty sand with % organic carbon. Graded stone layer could be used instead of geotextile and be just as efficient.

GE- 2 layers of geotextile not intended- misrepresented in drawing. Even though excavation is dry. Won't be completely dry- create stable work surface and prevent mixing. Not intended for entire site.

- Cap materials sized to prevent erosion in high flow events.

MP - Cap design did not take into account groundwater and plumes. Will not comment on source control specifics, but as much should be done as possible before cap installed.

EPA - Cap is not designed to be impermeable to water, but to act as filter to capture PCBs in water. Higher levels in sediments, more likely to have higher concentrations. Dissolved in water, so best to leave minimal levels behind.

GE - Higher level being left behind is 120 ppm in sediments.

MP - PCBs will build up in the "filler" – material used for cap and thickness of cap must accommodate "loading" of PCBs. Design life for clean filter is 300 years.

Q - What happens beyond 300 years?

MP - No contingencies, but PCBs will break down.

- Tree roots and burrowing will not be issues for capped area that is in channel. Caps not currently proposed for bank.

Q - What is the proper storm event to design for?

MP – Dams are usually designed for 100 – year event, but not 500 years. In 500-year event would probably have some movement of armor, but not everything carried downstream.

EPA - Highest velocity flow is just before overlap banks – after that it reaches equilibrium.

- Geotextile and rate of breakdown should not be our biggest concern
- Function of geotextile on banks – serves filtration function and prevents movement of soil particles through barrier. Provides clean surface to work on and visual barrier if have to go back.

Q - Concerns over burrowing in banks.

MP - Up to 3ft back should be adequate.

Q - Erosion of channel at Benedict?

DEP - Remediation completed but restoration will finish in spring. Erosion has been reported.

Q - Some erosion at Goodrich Brook but has been replaced

MP – HEL-2 is stage velocity model based on cross-sections. But doesn't predict changes in river/ sediment transport, but not saying that had to be used here.

Q - Concern about the time it takes to get vegetation back to where it is now. Estimate 25-30 years.

- Concern over minimal size of trees to be installed (diameter and height) vs. larger ones being planted in highway restoration.

GE- Sources of backfill will likely come from back gravel pit. Depends on contractors- different contractors have different sources.

DEP - Smaller stock more successful because larger stock tends to be root bound. Prefer to use native materials.

Q - Concern that politics making activities move too quickly before source control solved.

Agencies plan to address source control issue before work done in the river. Explanation of DNAPL characteristics and attributes. EPA shares concerns about limited removal of DNAPL.

Q - Any provisions for BMPs for existing storm drains to reduce sediment/sand influx?

Q - Can out-of town "fill", removed form rest of river, be brought to Pittsfield on-site consolidation areas?

No, haven't decided on remedy for rest of river yet.

Q - Why hasn't this been decided in negotiations?

Not sure we will be removing anything yet. May not even have enough room at facility for ½ mile or 1-½ miles.

Q - South country concerns about setting precedent for rest of river that may end up as South County landfill.

Q - Questions about why treatment technologies not being pursued.

EPA – There are 2 large landfills at facility that cannot be moved and some contamination being left behind. Confident that on-site consolidation will work, very safe and protective of human health. Essential element of reaching agreements. Figured it was worth it.

Jane suggested that people organize their questions relative to consolidation area concerns, for discussion at a later meeting.

In response to a question about similarities to and specifies of Bldg. 68. 8ft maximum based on engineering/stability situation. Max. 1000-2000 PPM at one location left behind. Not reasonable to reach 1ppm everywhere.

Public comments due next Wednesday.

Next CCC meeting: March 3, 1999; location to be confirmed. Topic: – consolidation areas and/or Supplemental Investigative Work Plan for the Lower River.

It was agreed that a future meeting cover the consolidation issue.